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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 24 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I refer to the letters dated 22 February and 16 March 1999 addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of Israel (A/53/840-S/1999/185 and A/54/74-S/1999/300), which were written in response to our letter of 18 February 1999 concerning Israel's expansion of the area it occupies in southern Lebanon by including in it the village of Arnoun as of 17 February (A/53/834-S/1999/172).

1. These two letters deliberately seek to ignore the prime fact in southern Lebanon that has been the cause of the violence and abuse directed against Lebanese residents there, namely the 21 years of Israeli occupation in flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations as it concerns relations between States.

2. Israel has refused to implement resolution 425 (1978), in which the Security Council calls upon Israel to withdraw its occupying forces forthwith and unconditionally to the internationally recognized boundaries. Its leaders have repeatedly issued statements linking acceptance of the resolution with measures and conditions that are alien to its letter and spirit and that, once admitted, would alter its legal and political character. By its intransigence, Israel has caused the deaths of thousands of Lebanese civilians and enormous losses in terms of property damage without its occupation achieving the security sought for its own citizens. It is difficult, by any measure, to accept the Israeli scenario that peace and security should be established in the area before the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory is ended.

3. The truth is obscured by the characterization, in both letters from the representative of Israel, of the Lebanese national resistance as terrorism. That resistance is sanctioned by international law and custom, to say nothing of

the fact that Israel and other countries recognized its legitimacy in connection with the understanding of April 1996.

4. The Lebanese resistance targets only the Israeli occupation inside Lebanese territory, and it responds to Israel's targeting of Lebanese civilians in its assaults.

5. The circulation of the two letters under agenda item 155, "Measures to eliminate international terrorism", gives the false impression that Lebanon is encouraging terrorism, whereas the Lebanese Government has frequently voiced its condemnation of terrorist acts. It has been joined in such condemnation by a large number of Governments, of both Arab and non-Arab countries, in the forefront of which has been that of the Syrian Arab Republic. The latter has, moreover, called for the convening of an international conference to define terrorism, to elaborate internationally acceptable criteria for differentiating between terrorism and national struggle for liberation from foreign occupation and to study the underlying causes of acts of violence that stem from the violation of basic human rights, misery, frustration, a sense of grievance and despair.

6. It is the State terrorism in which Israel has been engaging throughout its history against the peoples of Lebanon and other countries in the region under cover of conducting pre-emptive strikes that cannot be justified on any grounds whatever that has been repeatedly condemned by the United Nations and by regional and international conferences, and it has been demonstrated with the passage of time that this is not an effective way to establish international peace and security in the region.

I request you to have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 40 and 155, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Samir MOUBARAK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative